

Lessons of Liberty **Department of Veterans Affairs**

The "Lessons of Liberty" initiative is an opportunity for American students to learn more about our country and its values, as well as the people that have been called upon to defend its freedom.

How Schools Can Participate In "Lessons of Liberty "

- Schools will have access to a multitude of resources for participating in the "Lessons of Liberty" initiative through the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Education. Schools, educators, parents, and students can visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Web site at www.va.gov/vetsday to find classroom materials and curricula, ideas for activities, and resources for getting in touch with a veteran in their community. Additional ideas may be found on the Department of Education Web site at www.ed.gov.
- Leading veterans organizations -- including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Military Order of the World Wars -- are supporting the Lessons of Liberty effort and can be reached through their Web sites. A directory of veterans organizations is available at www1.va.gov/vso.
- The "Lessons of Liberty" initiative can be continued throughout the year through a variety of activities, including:
 - For Elementary and Middle School Students:
 - Read books about American history and government
 - Learn about outstanding leaders in America, past and present
 - Visit a historic site, such as a battleground
 - "Adopt an older American" and become a friend with a veteran
 - Participate in the "Friendship through Education" Initiative
 - For High School Students:
 - Register to vote
 - Pledge to mentor younger students on the "Lessons of Liberty"
 - Volunteer in community organizations
 - Organize student public service projects
 - Participate in the "Friendship through Education" Initiative
 - For Parents, Teachers and Administrators:
 - Prepare students for veteran visits through civics lessons
 - Encourage students to perform community service

Lesson plan ideas available at www.va.gov/vetsday and www.va.gov/kids/.

A HISTORY OF VETERANS DAY

Official recognition of the end of the first modern global conflict -- World War I -- was made in a concurrent resolution (44 Stat. 1982) enacted by Congress on June 4, 1926, with these words:

WHEREAS the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be served, and

WHEREAS it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations; and

WHEREAS the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday.

Therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring):

That the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U. S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938.

With this Act, the 11th of November in each year became a legal holiday -- a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day.'

"Armistice Day" was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the veterans' service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in lieu thereof the word 'Veterans.' With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

Later that same year, on October 8th, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first 'Veterans Day Proclamation' which stated:

"In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose. Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible. "

A letter from the President to the Honorable Harvey V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, was sent on the same date designating him to serve as Chairman. In 1958, the White House advised the VA's General Counsel that there was no need for another letter of appointment for each new Administrator, as the original proclamation in 1954 established the Committee with the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman.

The Uniforms Holiday Bill (Public Law 90-363 (82 Stat. 250)) was signed on June 28, 1968, and was intended to insure three-day weekends for Federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays - Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day. It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel, recreational and cultural activities and stimulate greater industrial and commercial production. Many states did not agree with this decision and continued to celebrate the holidays on their original dates. The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 25, 1971.

It was quite apparent that the commemoration of this day was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so on September 20th, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479) which would return the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in

1978. This action supported the express will of the overwhelming majority of the State legislatures, all major service organizations and the American people.

The restoration of the observance of Veterans Day to November 11 will help preserve in the hearts and lives of all our citizens the spirit of patriotism, the love of country and the willingness to serve and Sacrifice for the common good symbolized by this very special day.

For P. M. Release October 8, 1954
Murray Snyder, Assistant Press Secretary To The President

THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

**Lowery Air Force Base
Denver**

In connection with the signing of the proclamation on Veterans Day, the President today sent the following letter to the Honorable Harvey V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs:

Dear Mr. Higley:

I have today signed a proclamation calling upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954 as Veterans Day. It is my earnest hope that all veterans, their organizations, and the entire citizenry will join hands to insure proper and widespread observance of this day.

With the thought that it will be most helpful to coordinate the planning, I am suggesting the formation of a Veterans Day National Committee. In view of your great personal interest as well as your official responsibilities, I have designated you to serve as Chairman. You may include in the Committee membership such other persons as you desire to select and I am requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch to assist the Committee in its work in every way possible.

I have every confidence that our Nation will respond wholeheartedly in the appropriate observance of Veterans Day, 1954.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Veterans Day, 1954

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICAN

A PROCLAMATION

3071

Whereas it has long been our customs to commemorate November 11th the anniversary of the ending of World War I, by paying tribute to the heroes of that tragic struggle and by rededicating ourselves to the cause of peace; and

Whereas in the intervening years the United States has been involved in two other great military conflicts, which have added millions of veterans living and dead to the honor rolls of this Nation; and

Whereas the Congress passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926 (44 Stat. 1982), calling for the observance of November 11 with appropriate ceremonies, and later provided in an act approved May 13, 1938 (52 Stat. 351), that the eleventh of November should be a legal holiday and should be known as Armistice Day; and

Whereas, in order to expand the significance of that commemoration and in order that a grateful Nation might pay appropriate homage to the veterans of all its wars who have contributed so much to the preservation of this Nation, the Congress by an act approved June 1, 1954 (68 Stat. 168), changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day.

Now, Therefore, I, Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States of America, do hereby call upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954, as Veterans Day. On that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.

I also direct the appropriate officials of the Government to arrange for the display of the flag of the United States on all public buildings on Veterans Day. In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to wish to join hands in the common purpose.

Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and
cause the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.**

**Done at the City of Washington this eighth day of October in
the Year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty-four, and of the
Independence of the (SEAL) United States of America the one
hundred and seventy-ninth.**

By the President

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Secretary of State

JOHN FOSTER DULLES
